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Testimony of the Tweed New Haven Airport Authority in support for a \$1.5 million annual state operating grant to Tweed New Haven Regional Airport

Appropriations Committee
February 9, 2009

I am writing to request a \$1.5 million grant from the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Special Transportation fund to support the operation of Tweed New Haven Regional Airport.

Since 1997, the State of Connecticut steadfastly has supported Tweed and its efforts to establish high-quality commercial air service in southern Connecticut. The State has provided both operating and capital support, both of which enabled Tweed to complete a decade-long transformation of the Airport's infrastructure. The projected economic return on this investment is substantial. Tweed now generates \$20 million in economic activity and that figure increases to a total economic gain of more than \$50 million once Phases 1 and 2 of the Tweed Master Plan are complete.

As we near completion of the infrastructure improvements, the Tweed New Haven Airport Authority is proposing "Time is Now." This cooperative and responsible way-forward outlines a vision for the Airport which calls for a commitment to economic development; a partnership with the surrounding neighborhoods to mitigate the impact of Airport service growth; and expanded commercial service to additional hub cities, such as Chicago, Washington and Atlanta.

Turning to our fiscal condition, the lack of new commercial air service, reduced regional / government subsidies and the high costs associated with legal defense of the Runway Safety Area projects are having a serious adverse impact on the Authority's financial situation. New revenue from Airport growth is not likely for two to three years. The Authority began this fiscal year with a projecting an operating deficit of \$750,000 and no longer has available cash reserves to carry the Airport through difficult times. Without question, the State's full support of Tweed is essential.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request. Tweed is supported by the Transportation Strategy Board, the South Central Regional Council of Governments and our partners at the Federal Aviation Administration.

Please join us as we develop this economic asset for southern Connecticut.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Volchek', written over a horizontal line.

Mark Volchek
Chair